

January 27, 1999

Historical Record on Impeachment Witnesses Testimony Completed in a Matter of Days

"That has been the case from the beginning, that if we move into a period of depositions and testimony, there would be extension and delay."

*Joe Lockhart, Spokesman for President Clinton
January 26, 1999*

In the past 131 years, the U.S. Senate has conducted 15 impeachment trials of various public officials. Thirteen of the trials involved witnesses. Witnesses were not called in the other two trials because the officials resigned from office. However, a common thread is found in all trials held in the Senate — the testimony of witnesses lasted only a matter of days.

Attached is a chart obtained from Sen. Phil Gramm which shows the time required during each of the Senate's impeachment trials to hear the testimony of witnesses. The average for the 13 trials that included witnesses was 5 days of testimony for managers' witnesses and 4 days for respondents' witnesses. Note that this was for an average of 27 witnesses per trial, and so each witness averaged one-third of a day.

Even in the one impeachment of a president of the United States, witnesses only took up 14 days of floor time (41 witnesses in all, or an average of one-third of a day per witness during the three-month trial). The entire time required for both managers and respondents to present their case against President Johnson, including presentation of witnesses, was three weeks.

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IMPEACHMENT TRIAL WITNESSES

Official	Manager's Witnesses	Respondent's Witnesses
President Andrew Johnson (1868)	25 in 5 ½ days	16 in 8 days
Senator William Blount (1797)	No witnesses; trial dismissed after Senator Blount resigned	
Judge John Pickering (1803)	15 in 2 days	0
Justice Samuel Chase (1804)	20 in 5 days	33 in 4 ½ days
Judge James Peck (1826)	9 in 6 ½ days	11 in 4 ½ days
Judge West Humphreys (1862)	5 in 1 day	0
Secretary William Belknap (1876)	22 in 5 days	17 in 2 days
Judge Charles Swayne (1903)	33 in 7 ½ days	16 in 2 ½ days
Judge Robert Archbald (1912)	47 in 10 ½ days	59 in 6 ½ days
Judge George English (1926)	No witnesses; trial dismissed after Judge English resigned	
Judge Harold Louderback (1933)	24 in 2 ½ days	20 in 4 days
Judge Halsted Ritter (1936)	12 in 4 days	12 in 1 ½ days
Judge Harry Claiborne (1986) ¹	3 in 1 day	16 in 6 days
Judge Alcee Hastings (1989) ¹	26 in 11 days	29 in 7 days
Judge Walter Nixon (1989) ¹	4 in 1 day	6 in 1 ½ days

¹All witnesses were called before the Impeachment Committee and not before the Senate.